

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION
MINUTES OF APRIL 17, 2014
HAWKINS HOUSE
YAPHANK, NEW YORK**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Miles Borden	Trustee, Town of Smithtown
Dawn Hopkins	Chair, Trustee, Town of Brookhaven
Debra Kolyer	Member of the Board
Peter Leis	Trustee, Town of Islip
Alexander McKay	Trustee, Town of Huntington
Terrence Pearsall	Member of the Board
William B. Sickles	Trustee, Town of Southampton
Richard F. White, Jr.	Trustee, Town of East Hampton

ABSENT

Gilbert Cardillo	Trustee, Town of Riverhead
Christopher DiGregorio	Trustee, Town of Southold
Kathleen Gooding, Ph.D.	Vice Chair, Town of Shelter Island
Tom Young	County Attorney's Office
VACANT	Trustee, Town of Babylon
VACANT	Member at Large

PARKS DEPARTMENT

Greg Dawson	Commissioner
Jim Barr	Superintendent
Nick Gibbons	Principal Environmental Analyst
Richard Martin	Director of Historic Services
Barbara Rittman	Senior Clerk Typist

GUESTS

Christina DeLisi	Legislative Aide to Deputy Presiding Officer Jay H. Schneiderman
Chris DeLuca	Legislative Aide to Legislator Thomas Cilmi
Bob Kessler	Yaphank Historical Society
Karen Mouzakes	Yaphank Historical Society

PUBLIC PORTION

Robert C. Ford attended to listen to topics on the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 20, 2014

Page 2 – Chair's Report – 3rd paragraph – The Lake Ronkonkoma Advisory Board held a meeting with a presentation by the USGS. The USGS did a pilot ground water quality study of the lake in the summer of 2013 and the winter of 2014.

A motion to accept the minutes as amended was made by Trustee Richard White and seconded by Trustee Alex McKay. The minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Dawson reported that Suffolk County golf courses are now open for business.

Due to a slow Legislative cycle there was nothing new to report. Commissioner Dawson turned the meeting over to Richard Martin for a brief presentation of the historic significance of Hawkins House. Richard reported that the Yaphank Historic Society has been awarded for its organizational excellence by the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities. The award is due in large part to work done at Suffolk County Parks historic sites. Work on the Hawkins House began in 1978, two years before the Suffolk County Office of Historic Services was established and at the time Hawkins House was slated to be demolished by the County for a road widening project. The Yaphank Historic Society came forward and campaigned to save it. They raised funds to do restoration work to the interior and opened Hawkins House to the public in 1986. This is the first historic site within the Suffolk County Parks System that was opened to the public on a regular basis.

Since then, the Yaphank Historic Society has also worked with the County to restore the Booth House (across the street) which dates back to 1829. It is the birth place of Mary Louise Booth who was the editor of Harper's Bazaar Magazine in New York City and was also involved in civil rights issues during the 19th century. Yaphank Historical Society did a lot of the restoration work on the interior while the County worked on the exterior. It is now open to tourists during the summer months.

Restoration work is currently being done to the Homan House which is directly across the street and dates back to 1790. It will be restored to approximately the mid-19th century and will also be opened to the public. The Request For Proposals (RFPs) have gone out to hire a restoration architect to work with DPW and the necessary framing work has been completed to stabilize the building so that the project can move forward. The Society has moved to the other side of town and has an agreement with the Town of Brookhaven to use the Swezey House for exhibits, hosting indoor programs and maintaining their archives. The Yaphank Historic Society has been instrumental in getting the "Yaphank Historic District" established on Main Street and restoring it for the future.

Bob Kessler explained about their vision for the Yaphank community. He reported that the Society has signed an agreement to renovate and manage the Swezey House. The upper floors have already been renovated and work has begun on the main floor. All of their archives have been moved from the Hawkins House to the Swezey House so that plans can move ahead to use Hawkins House as a museum. The Swezey House has a much larger meeting space, four exhibit rooms and is located on a lake. A grand opening is planned for August for the Swezey House. Work is continuing on the Homan House which also includes a parking area. There are plans to create historic fencing around the historic district, as well as a "going over" (stone wall) to create an entrance into the community. The term "going over" got its name to describe where a river goes under a road.

On the Yaphank Historic Society website, there is an explanation of all of the information in its archives that Karen Mouzakes has gathered together over the past forty years.

Karen Mouzakes stated that the Yaphank Historical Society is very lucky to have County and Town presence at both ends of the town because the two mill house sites connect the historic district together. She explained that when schools and churches were built back in the 1800s, the written provisions for them always stated that they be built between the two original mills – the Swezey Mill and the Homan-Gerard Mill.

Commissioner Dawson stated that the Parks Department is appreciative of the fact that the Yaphank Historical Society took over and occupied these sites to make them habitable, help deter vandalism and assist the County in renovating and restoring these historic buildings.

Commissioner Dawson asked Nick Gibbons for an update on fencing preparations for the piping plover season. Nick reported that they are currently working on the fencing.

Commissioner Dawson announced that Parks Superintendent Jim Barr is president of Long Island ABATE, Incorporated (American Bikers For Awareness Training and Education) and has a proposal to present pertaining to the Beagle Club property in Calverton. Jim explained that ABATE is a 501c3, not-for-profit charity that works with elected officials and local law enforcement agencies to improve road and rider conditions for motorcyclists. ABATE is also a member of the Suffolk County Traffic Safety Board. As a local charity, the organization is seeking a home base to work from and has submitted to the Parks Department a proposal that explains what it would like to do if successful in obtaining a license agreement to use the Beagle Club property. A few of the things that ABATE would do would be to hold meetings on Tuesday nights, provide occasional safety classes for motorcyclists, provide driver education classes to the public, provide an onsite presence to deter vandalism, contract with a motorcycle school to provide classroom driver training and hold small fundraisers on the property in order to reinvest in the facility and make improvements. The types of fundraisers it would consider would be to hold car shows, flea markets and farmer's markets, working with the local Farmer's Association in Riverhead. The inside of the building on the property has a large open meeting room which is 32 feet by 55 feet where the organization would consider having an acoustic night, and barbecues and picnics could be held outdoors in nice weather to assist in bringing in revenue.

With the revenue received, ABATE would make improvements to the property and facility. It would ask that the Parks Department periodically mow the two open acres of lawn and install an intrusion alarm which is typically done at all Parks facilities. The entire Beagle Club property consists of 150 acres completely fenced in with chain link and within the 150 acres is 2 fenced acres of open cleared land containing a house with two barns. The remaining 148 acres could be improved and used as passive park land for all Suffolk County residents. ABATE would like to participate and assist in opening up that part of the property also if the Parks Department is in agreement. The organization currently has 700 members who have signed up since January 1, 2014 and many volunteers who are willing to assist. The 148 acre parcel could also be used in the future for hunting, hiking and horseback riding trails, Scouting and Beagle Club group activities.

ABATE is very involved with charities and our veterans. The organization raised \$40,000 last year and is in contact with the Suffolk County Director of Veterans Services periodically throughout the year for advice on where the revenue raised is most needed. The organization holds toy drives every year and works with the Guardians of Rescue, who train dogs for veterans returning from war. One of the barns on the property is already set up as a kennel and could be utilized for this training. The Boots on the Ground Organization could hold counseling sessions once a week for veterans in one of the offices. This organization also provides returning soldiers with furniture for apartments and one of the barns could be utilized for furniture storage until needed. In addition, the local community could hold civic meetings and farming groups could hold meetings and auctions on the property. Suffolk County Police could train their canine dogs using the 148 acre parcel. ABATE also supports Long Island Cares and the Beagle Club property could be a drop-off point for food collections throughout the year. Suffolk County Parks offers CPR training for all employees annually and defensive driving classes which the property could be utilized for. Jim stated that the property would be open to all worthy causes.

Jim reported that he had already met with Legislator Krupski to propose the idea. Legislator Krupski was very pleased with the idea and offered to sponsor the resolution. He also met with the Parks Committee Chairman, Legislator Schneiderman and he offered to co-sponsor the resolution. He then presented the idea to Commissioner Dawson to explain what the organization would like to do. Trustee Sickles inquired if the reference to maintenance was meant strictly for the two acre parcel and also regarding intentions for using the 148 acres as passive parkland. Jim stated that the organization would only request maintenance of the 2 acre fenced parcel, however he would be happy to arrange a volunteer group to help with a clean-up of the larger

parcel. Nick Gibbons added that he has been considering the large parcel for archery bow-hunting and possibly falcon hunting.

In closing, Jim stated that he has worked for Suffolk County Parks for thirty years and is confident that the ABATE organization he represents would be outstanding tenants for the Parks Department.

A motion to accept the resolution to allow for this use of the property as presented was made by Trustee Sickles and was seconded by Trustee McKay. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Dawn Hopkins inquired if the Parks Department offers employment programs for students. Commissioner Dawson stated that the Parks Department has a part-time and seasonal hiring program for high school and college students and employment applications can now be easily accessed and downloaded on the County website.

ROUND TABLE

Trustee McKay inquired about the weir at Fresh Pond and whether or not it is County owned property because he heard a resident speak about the weir at a Crab Meadow Advisory Board meeting and he stated that he was going to undertake a renovation of it. Nick stated that he doesn't believe the weir is County owned, however it does own a small sliver of property between two residences. Nick stated that he would verify that information and get back to Trustee McKay to confirm.

Trustee White reported that he was able to attend a meeting with Commissioner Dawson, East Hampton Deputy Town Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc and other representatives to discuss some questions pertaining to Northwest Harbor and he was very pleased with the open dialog that took place.

Trustee Sickles inquired if there are any Earth Day events planned for Suffolk County. Commissioner Dawson announced that on May 3rd the County will hold its annual Eco-Carnival at Seatuck.

Trustee Sickles inquired if the move of Park Police to the Suffolk County Police Department has occurred yet. Commissioner Dawson stated that the move has not taken place because the legislation is still up at the New York State Legislature to be voted on. He added that once the changeover does occur, there will be no lapse of time with no Park Ranger coverage at Suffolk County Parks.

Trustee Sickles inquired to Nick Gibbons if there is string fencing up west of Shinnecock Inlet along the beach and around the Road L area. Nick stated that his crew just started work there today, Cedar Pt. is already closed off and the next area to be covered will be Cupsogue.

Trustee Sickles inquired about the Town of Southampton plans for the revitalization of the Flanders/Riverside area along the Flanders Road corridor, which includes the pedestrian bridge across the Peconic River. On the south side of the river where the bridge would end up is County parkland (a 15 acre parcel). Commissioner Dawson stated that the Parks Department is currently reviewing the proposal.

The next meeting will be held at Indian Island County Park in Riverhead on Thursday, May 15, 2014.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Member of the Board Terrence Pearsall and was seconded by Trustee McKay. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.